

ABSTRACT

The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a) is a text that provides us with a wealth of information related to questions of the transmission of the biblical text, scribal practices, and Hebrew linguistics. It is also a text that presents a number of challenges, particularly in light of the variations of scribal practice found within the scroll. But in addition to the challenges, such variations also provide insight into the important issues related to the composition of the scroll—questions concerning the number of scribes involved in the production of 1QIsa^a, scribal attitudes and approach to the text, and the linguistic and theological influences that may have affected the scribal activity in the scroll.

The present thesis examines these questions through a comprehensive analysis of the scribal practices employed in 1QIsa^a—the physical features and layout of the scroll, its palaeography, and the linguistic features of the scroll: orthographic, morphological, and syntactical. Several textual variants will also be examined to determine the extent of the theological or exegetical influences that may have motivated the scribal approach to the text of Isaiah. The results of this study have direct bearing on the questions of (1) the number of scribes responsible for the production of 1QIsa^a, (2) the manner in which 1QIsa^a was produced, and (3) the scribal approach to the text, namely, the range and limits of scribal activity in 1QIsa^a. This study proposes that despite the variations of scribal practice, 1QIsa^a is the product of a single primary scribe who produced the scroll in two separate stages. Further, the patterns of scribal practice suggest that 1QIsa^a was the result of a transmissional history that divided the book of Isaiah into four quarters. Finally, the scribe of 1QIsa^a, though uniquely innovative in his linguistic approach to the text was found to be conservative in his theological approach, with few, if any significant variants arising from exegetical considerations.